FWIS 154: The good, the Bad and the Border

Art and culture in the US-Mexico borderlands

Instructor – Elizabeth Cummins Muñoz, ecmunoz@rice.edu
Class meetings – Tues. & Thur., 11:20-12:40, Zoom (& DCH 1046)
Drop-in hours – Thursdays 1-2, Zoom (& Brochstein Pavilion)
Information – All course information can be found on Canvas, including this Syllabus and the Course Schedule with homework, lessons and assignments.
Books – Most readings and films are available on Canvas. You will also need the following texts:

- *All the Pretty Horses*, Cormac McCarthy (any edition)
- **They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein (3rd Edition or later).
- **Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, Joseph M. Williams, Gregory G. Colomb (any edition, we'll be using 5th).

*These books are great to have in your personal library. I can also make PDFs available if you'd prefer not to purchase.

Art and Culture in the Borderlands

Good and Bad on the Border

We will study examples of film, poetry, ballad and narrative that question accepted ideas of right and wrong, and consider the concept of cultural relativism as it relates to morality.

Border Heroes

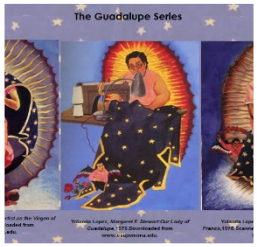
We will look at narrative and film that reexamines the figure of the hero in light of social tensions around race and gender along the historical US-Mexico border, and we will consider how the genre of the Western aligns with these tensions.

Unequal Crossings

This unit examines representations of the border as it relates to immigration, with special consideration given to the relationship between legal codes and moral codes when it comes to migration across the US-Mexico border.

Borderlands of Identity

This last unit looks at essays, short stories and visual art that engages the bicultural identities of Chicanx communities, with a particular focus on competing notions of good and bad as it relates to gender.



"At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes."
Gloria Anzaldúa

Learning Goals

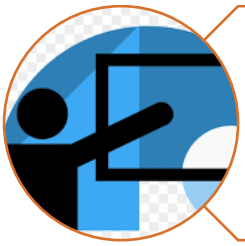
- To reflect thoughtfully on the relationship between artistic expression and cultural meaning systems, especially as it relates to the confluence of cultural influences along the US-Mexico border.
- To be familiar with conversations related to the border as place and idea, to Chicanx studies, and to moral codes as they relates to culture.
- To analyze cultural forms (literature and film) in order to better understand the values and experiences of the people and groups that produce them.

For primary texts and further reading on course topics, see the course Bibliography.

Writing, Reading, Thinking

Assignments

In addition to seminar discussions related to readings and ideas, we will develop and strengthen skills in writing, reading and oral & visual presentation by working on the following projects. You can find detailed instructions for each assignment on Canvas.



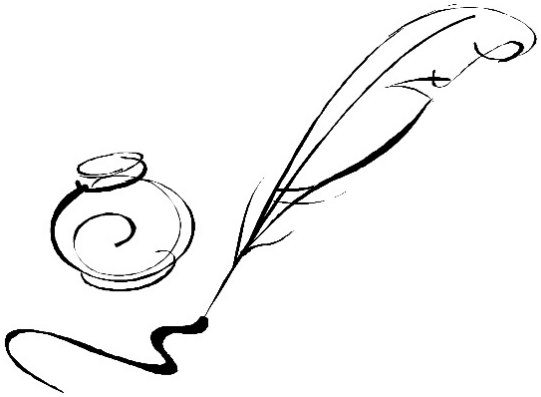
Teach Text presentation – a chance to "teach" the argument of a scholarly article to your classmates.

Mini-essays – brief, low-stakes writing assignments to work on specific skills related to larger projects.

Summary & Response essay – an essay in which you summarize a scholarly article and respond to it with your own ideas about the subject.

Cultural Commentary – a chance to move away from strictly academic writing and write about something that is important to you, for a broader audience.

Research Project – your chance to bring together your skills to develop an argument about course themes and support it with analysis and research. Our virtual "poster" presentation will be an opportunity to share your work.



"I have four principles of writing good English. They are Clarity, Simplicity, Brevity, and Humanity."
William Zinsser

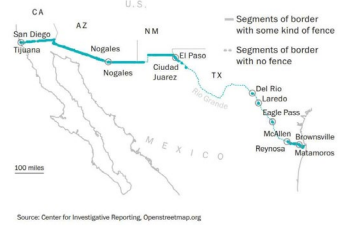
Learning Goals

- To **write** accurately, effectively, and *carefully, with audience and purpose in mind. Specifically, to match language and structure to rhetorical context.
- To **read** carefully, recognize when you don't understand, and develop strategies to understand better. In particular, to recognize the argument, claims, evidence, and broader context of scholarly writing.
- To acquire the tools necessary to write successful college papers, including an awareness of genre expectations for academic writing and citation practices.
- To apply best practices of oral and visual communication to formal and informal presentations.
- To **ask** thoughtful questions about the material you encounter, and to recognize the assumptions embedded in your questions.

How FWIS 154 Works…

Classes & Meetings

- ***Class meetings*** **-** We have a number of options available to us this semester, online meeting and discussion, hybrid online and in-person meetings, and interesting content and skill-building work that can be completed outside of class. We'll work together to find the balance that works best for all of us, and always be ready to adjust and adapt.
  (*If you have concerns about technology or about using your camera/microphone, or if you need an accommodation related to this technology, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss and work out needed adjustments.)
- ***Discussion & group work*** **-** Discussion is an important part of any seminar, and it can be done in person, virtually, or even via asynchronous forums – written or recorded. Again, we will find the modes that work best for all of us. Group work will be an opportunity to get to know your classmates and learn from each other.
- ***Drop-in Hours*** - I'll be holding regular "drop-in hours" from 1-2 on Thursdays (Zoom for now, Zoom + at tables outside Brochstein in future). This is an opportunity to ask questions or chat about readings and ideas that come up in class. Drop-in hours are designed to be very casual, no pressure to have something specific to say. Come one, come all!



Preparing for Class

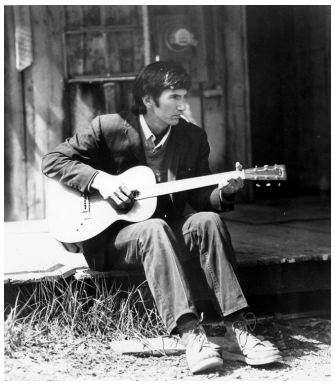
- ***Course Schedule*** **-** You can find all readings, lessons and major assignments on the Course Schedule (Canvas > Syllabus > Course Schedule).
- ***Homework*** **-** You will have something to read or prepare for each class. Check the course schedule for "homework due today." All writing assignments are due on Sundays at 11:59pm; due dates can be found on the individual assignments and on the course schedule.
- ***Readings & Films*** **-** Unless otherwise instructed, prepare assigned texts by "Annotating & Responding," as follows:

✓ Step 1. Read/view the text

✓ Step 2. Take note of significant or interesting passages and reflecting on connections to ideas and other texts

✓ Step 3. Take a few notes on how you might respond to the following questions in class discussion:

Overall, how did you feel about this text?
What questions did it bring up?
How does it connect to our class discussions and your own reading?
Would you recommend this text to a friend? why or why not?



…How FWIS 154 Works

Grades & Evaluation

How your grade is calculated

- Your course grade is weighted according to the following categories:

- 15% Seminar and workshop participation (Class preparation, In-class discussion, Peer review)
- 15% Teach Text presentation
- 12% Mini-essays
- 15% Summary and Response essay
- 15% Cultural Commentary
- 28% Final project.
- (*note- a FWIS course cannot be taken pass/fail and cannot be dropped after the second week of classes.*

98 - 100 = A+
93 to < 98 = A
90 to < 93 = A-
88 to < 90 = B+
84 to < 88 = B
81 to < 84 = B-
78 to < 81 = C+
74 to < 78 = C
70 to < 74 = C-
68 to < 70 = D+
63 to < 68 = D
< 60 = F

How your work is evaluated

- Each assignment is evaluated with a rubric that focuses on specific learning objectives. For each objective, you might earn one of the following:

- A (exceeds expectations)
- B (meets expectations)
- C (meets most expectations with some significant errors)
- D (does not meet expectations)
- F (does not meet expectations by a significant degree).

Late work & Revisions

- Papers received after the deadline will lose half of a letter grade in 48-hour increments. I strongly encourage you to talk to me if you are concerned about upcoming deadlines. I accept compelling requests for extensions made prior to 24 hours before assignments are due.

- Any essay can be revised within one week of receiving your grade, on a few conditions: 1-meet with me to discuss before revising, 2-make substantive revisions (not just spelling or grammar), and 3-include a description of revisions with your new submission.

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this assignment."

The **Honor Code** system and academic fraud are described and explained in the Honor System Handbook. You are responsible for understanding the university's rules regarding academic integrity. In this course, I expect you to do the actual writing of your assignments on your own, with no outside help from anyone else. However, you are encouraged to collaborate in other areas - discussing assignments, reading each other's work, making suggestions for revision.

Support for Learning and Beyond

Individual Consultations. If you would like to meet one-on-one to discuss your work, you can schedule a meeting via Canvas messaging or email, ecmunoz@rice.edu.

Center for Academic & Professional Communication
RICE

CAPC Consultations. The Center for Academic and Professional Communication offers workshops on writing and presentations, and one-on-one consultations available at no extra charge to all Rice students. Take advantage of this excellent resource!

Fondren Library (library.rice.edu). Fondren offers a wealth of resources and support to undergraduate learners and researchers; reference librarians are on duty and available for any questions you may have. For tutorials on research and study tools, see the Fondren Learning Zone (fondrenlearning.blogs.rice.edu).

Disability Resource Center (drc.rice.edu, adarice@rice.edu, 713-348-5841). Any student with a documented need for academic adjustments or accommodations should speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Please don't be shy about requesting accomodations - you're entitled to this support!

RICE UNIVERSITY STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

Student Success Initiatives (success.rice.edu). The SSI office offers a variety of resources, including guidance in time-management and study skills, first generation student support, and an anonymous food pantry.

Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center* (wellbeing.rice.edu). The Wellbeing office is a great place to start if you know you need help but you're not sure what exactly you need. The center offers drop-in hours during weekdays, and **24/7 phone line: 713-348-3311**.

Student Health Services* (health.rice.edu) 713-348-4966

*Health Services and the Wellbeing and Counseling Center employ Title IX staff members who will maintain confidentiality.